

**THE UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**GENDER-RELATED PROBLEMS THAT FEMALE PRINCIPALS PERCEIVE THEY  
ENCOUNTER ON THE JOB IN SCHOOLS IN VENDA**

**A DISSERTATION IN  
THE FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION (EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT)**

**BY  
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1. WOMEN - EDUCATION.

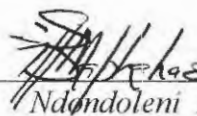
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#### DECLARATION.

I, *NDONDOLANI MAPHAHA*, declare that this dissertation " GENDER-RELATED PROBLEMS THAT FEMALE PRINCIPALS PERCEIVE THEY ENCOUNTER ON THE JOB IN SCHOOLS IN VENDA," which I am submitting to the University of Durban-Westville, is my own work, both in conception and execution. I also declare that this work has not been submitted to any university by me before.

SIGNED:

  
*Ndondoleni Maphaha*

May 1996.

## DEDICATION

This work marks a turning-point in my life, and I therefore dedicate it with humility to my beloved family, my sweetheart, my wife **TSHILIDZI MATHILDA (TILLY)** and our children, **DZINZANANI (DZIDZI)**, **ATHIOFHI ZWOPHETHEA**, **SHAKA JEDIDIA** and **PILGRIM HUNANI MAANDA**. My wife is, undoubtedly, proud to have witnessed this major event that took place in our family. She and our children have given me support and comfort. This study was a real sacrifice by all members of the family. I have robbed our darlings precious time to be with their Dad at their tender age [PILGRIM was in fact born when I was abroad studying]. I also dedicate this work to my mother **NYAWAISEDZA MAANDA SINGO (RAMMBUDA)** and her son **TSHIITAKHOLE RAMABULANA**. The two gave me love, supported and protected me selflessly.

Lastly, I dedicate this work to all the women of South Africa, Blacks in particular, and I say to them,

" You are not alone in your quest for gender equity.

Soldier on...**victory** is absolutely certain. "

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## ABSTRACT.

The purpose of this study was to investigate gender-related problems that female principals perceive they encounter on the job in schools in Venda. Life is characterized by a consistent struggle against domination of man by man, and in South Africa, Blacks have at last attained equality with Whites partly by waging armed War and also by Negotiating. This attainment of equality is indeed a cause for celebration, but we must realize that we can never be a completely free nation until women are liberated from domination by men. Women, in all walks of life, must also breathe the true air of freedom. In our new-born democratic South Africa, the liberation of women cannot be delayed any longer.

This work is an attempt at addressing gender issues that bedevil our country. It looks into discrimination and domination of women school leaders. Literature on school leadership, though very limited, abounds with facts about gender hardships that women suffer before and after appointment in school leadership positions. This research specifically determined what gender-related problems female principals of public schools perceive they encounter on the job in schools in Venda, an area in the Northern Province, South Africa. There are 166 female principals of primary and secondary public schools in Venda out of a total of 676. 72 out of this 166 were targeted for participation in this research. The participants gave their opinions and feelings by completing a questionnaire and also by way of interviews.

Female principals in Venda confirmed literature claims and unanimously indicated that they are indeed encountering an array of difficulties on the job on account of their gender. They have shown that they have common experiences of hardships which their male counterparts do not .

Key hardships found were the following:

- a) Female principals are regarded as tokens. They are not taken seriously. Their leadership is undermined .
- b) Female principals remain basically isolated. It is difficult for them to get support in their job.
- c) As school leaders they struggle with a heavy workload of their job and and of their families.
- d) They struggle against a host of negative attitudes of staff and of community.
- e) Teachers (males in particular), students and parents resent the authority of a female principal.

This research suggests certain strategies that could be implemented in order to combat and minimize those problems. These strategies include the following:

- a) Conscientization of women principals by women in leadership positions in other spheres.
- b) Legislation to outlaw structures of society that tend to discriminate against women leaders.
- c) Providing women school leaders with relevant reading material.
- d) Setting up forums of female principals.
- e) Both male and females to get the right kind of sexual orientation and training at colleges of education.

Finally, key research suggestions made are the following:

- a) Research to be conducted with female school middle-managers and teachers.
- b) Research to look into the extent to which gender-related issues impact negatively on the female school leaders in terms of leadership style, work rate and job-satisfaction.

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## CHAPTER 1.

### (NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH).

#### 1.1. INTRODUCTION.

After the demise of Apartheid, the South African education system is faced with enormous challenges. As the country emerges from the history of racial and gender inequalities, efforts are being made to address some of these challenges. These challenges include:

- (a) The provision of quality education to all citizens.
- (b) The redress of past educational imbalances.
- (c) The bringing about of gender equity.

In order to handle these challenges effectively, there is need for the country to optimise the utilization of the potential of all its citizens. The country's human resource has to be developed as never before. In order to realize this aim, women development should be priority number one because for a long time now it seems their potential has been relatively under-utilized.

Luckily, the White Paper on education (1995) acknowledges that there are serious disparities between men and women and that women do suffer discrimination and ill-treatment within the education system. The White Paper indicates that in many schools and other institutions, instances of male domination of women are rife and that women teachers are subjected to an array of sexual harassments and other forms of abuse. The White Paper goes on to state that

women are well represented in teaching, yet they are unfairly represented in school leadership. The Paper asserts that causes of this unfair representation of women in school leadership is in the values and gender role patterns of the South African families and communities, and the patriarchal culture of bureaucracy.

At this assertion, the researcher feels that issues in school leadership, especially those that affect women, are crucial and therefore there is a need to investigate them. The researcher feels that women school leaders are key role players in our endeavour of bringing about gender equity. The leadership potential of women school leaders has to be optimally developed. Indeed, the work environment for female school leaders has not been favourable, that is why there is a need for a scientific investigation. The researcher intends doing this by concentrating on female principals, and more specifically those in Venda which is part of South Africa in the Northern Province.

True experience informs us that women in South Africa, Blacks in particular, were the OPPRESSED of the OPPRESSED. They suffered racial and gender oppression simultaneously. Still now, culture and traditions deny Black women their complete freedom. Men still take decisions alone without consulting women. Women are still taken for granted. They are still expected to perform all kinds of difficult duties in homes while men relax. Women serve men in virtually everything. They are expected to be submissive and always to beg from men. They are made to depend on men for their existence. For these reasons the

researcher believes that the kinds of things described above do impact negatively on the female principals.

## 1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

In South Africa the history of Black women leaders and leadership is inextricably linked with the history of the treatment of women in the larger society. Black women have been kept underrepresented in leadership positions through culture and Apartheid. This has inevitably led to a leadership crisis. Today, in an attempt at redressing the past imbalances, women are being elevated to prominent positions, but it does not seem that the general public has come to terms with that. In many quarters discrimination of women is still taken for granted ( Innes, Kentridge and Perold, 1993 ). One area in which gender discrimination has become the order of the day is in school leadership. Research indicates that school leadership has been traditionally reserved for men while women were confined to teaching (Shakeshaft, 1987 and Pigford and Tonnsen, 1993). In South Africa men continue to dominate in school leadership irrespective of the fact that there are more female teachers than males. For instance, Mamabolo (1994) has found that in the Northern Province alone, there are more female teachers than males and these females are better qualified than the male ones. This simply means that though a visible minority, and not better qualified, males continue to exercise power over the femalemajority in schools.

Venda as a South African territory and a sub-area of the Northern Province is not exempted

from the problems described above. In fact as far as the position of women is concerned, Venda still has very conservative and traditional structures that oppress women. Women are still regarded as minors. Vhavenda boys are taught to despise women at the time when they are still toddlers. The father makes sure that the boys get the "correct" interpretation of what is manly and what is womanly. In Venda, traditional schools still run concurrently with the modern schools. It is in these schools where boys and girls learn their traditional roles of inequalities. The researcher assumes that female principals in schools in Venda do encounter gender-related problems on the job as a result of the life that prevails outside in the communities. There does not seem to be equal treatment between men and women in schools in Venda.

### 1.3. THE RESEARCH QUESTION.

This study intends to answer the question, "WHAT ARE THE GENDER-RELATED PROBLEMS THAT FEMALE PRINCIPALS PERCEIVE THEY ENCOUNTER ON THE JOB IN SCHOOLS IN VENDA?" In order to answer this question the study looks into the following areas in respect of the female principal's job.

- (a) The question of the female principal's confidence on the job.
- (b) The impact of home and school roles for a female principal.
- (c) Community perceptions of the female principal.
- (d) Relations between the female principal and the staff and other male principals.

(e) The female principal and the control of students.

(f) Relations between the female principal and the higher authorities.

It is hoped that investigation into these areas would reveal that female principals in schools in Venda do encounter gender-related problems on the job. This investigation is backed by the following hypothesis.

#### 1.4. THE HYPOTHESIS.

The research question is informed by the assumption that female principals do perceive that they encounter problems on the job on account of their gender. The question then is, "What are those specific problems that are so unique to them as principals? The hypothesis is based on research claims and opinions that are made both locally and abroad, especially in the United States of America. The following works in this regard would suffice.

---- According to Glazer (1991) and Stead (1978) teaching in the United States is generally viewed as a job for the female while school administration is for the male. Consequently when a female is appointed into a principalship position, she already finds herself operating in a male dominated organization.

---- It is still generally believed that the role of the principal calls for characteristics thought of as masculine. These characteristics include: assertiveness, ability to remain cool and control one's emotions and to be able to exercise independence (Erickson, 1985). Since these characteristics are not associated with females, females are therefore expected to

shift their perceived personalities if they want to be acceptable school leaders.

---- According to Marshall (1992) the female school administrator encounters gender-related problems because the values, expectations and activities of school administration are based on the assumption that its members will be males. In this way the female principal enters and works in an environment which is basically not prepared for her.

On the local scene, a South African female is forced to compete for a principalship position under very unfavourable conditions. For instance, on the day of the interview she is invariably faced with a hostile male-dominated panel of interviewers, inferiority projection and lack of encouragement (Johnson, 1982). If then a female principal encounters these kinds of barriers at the entry point, what then becomes of her daily experiences on the job? In other words how much more discrimination would she experience right on the job after securing the post? It is these kinds of questions and the assumptions that make this research imperative indeed.

### 1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.

Recent research has been concentrating on barriers for the potential female leaders in their upward mobility and paid no attention to those females already in those leadership positions in schools. This study intends to propose a new approach in looking at gender issues in school leadership. The study intends to add to the current body of knowledge on the South African school leadership and how gender issues impact on it. In other words it takes previous



research a step further.

This study views the division of sexes into two arbitrary and irrational gender roles as a disparity that is restricting human potential development, especially that of females. In fact, according to Prekel (n.d.), many females in South Africa are still developed and utilized below their potential. It is the intention of this study to encourage better utilization of female principals, a move that would obviously be in the interest of educational and economic development of the country as a whole.

This study encourages the need to know feminist perspectives, the need to embody emancipatory approaches that emerge from the female's experiences and the need to articulate female's beliefs, values and attitudes in school leadership. It is hoped that females' experiences would have a reasonable impact on the thinking of the practitioners and policy makers in education. Those who control the education profession would be encouraged to engage in collaborative efforts to assist the female principals.

Change is the most pressing issue facing South Africa currently and this change goes for school leadership as well. This study intends to propose the restructuring of school leadership training so that it should encompass the female perspectives as well. The envisaged change would be on how principalship should be studied as a profession. The study would encourage the need for the kind of principalship transformation that does not favour either of the two sexes. The envisaged proposals are with the understanding that at the end of the day there will

be equal treatment between male and female that will ultimately lead to a greater autonomy and status within the teaching profession and school leadership.

A study of this nature is imperative because literature claims that female school leadership holds promising prospects for the future. In spite of the hardships that female school leaders encounter, some researchers in the United States of America have found that females offer quality leadership in school management. Marshall ( 1992 ) indicates that the females' values, ways of knowing, and moral judgement are closely tied to feelings of empathy and compassion for others. As school leaders, the female's views of schooling, ways of managing and ways of structuring interactions hold promise for improving school leadership especially in communication and in instructional supervision. According to Eagly, Karau and Johnson (1 992 ) female principals are likely to be more democratically inclined than males. They would, for example, treat teachers and other subordinates as colleagues and would encourage participatory decision-making. Female principals are more likely to encourage empowerment of teachers, attend to social and emotional development of learners and focus on teacher feelings ( Shakeshaft, 1992 ). Bossert , Dwyer , Rowan and Lee (1982 ) claim that females make better principals than males because they exchange information more readily, spend more hours at work and are disposed to change. For all these reasons, school leadership as a career can be said to be congenial to females. The study of this nature is, therefore, worth undertaking.

## 1.6. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS.

In this study an endeavour is made to use terminology as far as it is relevant to the research question in particular. The following concepts have been used interchangeably because of their similarities in this study.

- Women and female.
- Man and male.
- School leader and principal and school administrator.
- School leadership and principalship and leadership.
- Gender and sex.
- Problem and difficulty and difficult experiences.

### 1.6.1. GENDER-RELATED PROBLEMS.

These are problems that have their origin in gender issues. Female principals experience these problems on account of their gender.

### 1.6.2. PERCEIVED PROBLEMS.

These are problems that female principals experience and such problems may not be experienced, by the other members of the school community.

### 1.6.3. ON THE JOB PROBLEMS.

By these it is meant those problems that constitute the day to day experience of the female

who is already a principal. A distinction is made between an aspirant female principal and the one already occupying the post.

### 1.6.3. VENDA.

Venda is a sub-region of the Northern Province. The new demarcation of boundaries may not follow the old Apartheid Venda. In this research, Venda means the area inhabited by majority of people who speak Luvenda and who constitute a distinct ethnic group.

### 1.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.

This study focuses on the perceptions of Black female principals of senior primary and secondary schools in the following six inspection areas of Venda: Mutale, Mutshundudi, Nzhelele, Thohoyandou, Tshitandani and Vuwani. By coincidence, all principals of these schools in the six inspection areas are Black and all speak Luvenda. There are also no comprehensive schools in Venda. The study is limited in as far as it does not include female principals of other races and other ethnic groups. The other limit is that it does not include female principals of junior primary schools and also those of private schools. The target sample does not include acting principals. Data gathered depends on the ability of the female principals to identify those problems that they experience on the job. It is therefore a difficult task to ensure that participants give their absolute honest responses. The results of this study are generalized for the whole of Venda. The researcher wishes to acknowledge that

the new Education Department of the Northern Province is considering completely new education boundaries in line with the new spirit of dismantling tribalism and ethnicism.

Since the research instruments used induced self-reporting and also reporting on other peoples' behaviour, the reliability and the validity of the data is limited in terms of accuracy, sincerity, honesty and integrity of the participants.

#### 1.8. LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS.

Chapter 1 dealt with the nature and scope of the research. The background to the problem to be researched was provided. The problem was stated, and the research question was formulated. The rationale for the study was given. Definition of concepts and the limitations were given in this chapter. In chapter 2 the problem is investigated in the literature in detail. The reader is informed about gender-related problems that female principals encounter on the job. In chapter 3 the methodology design is expounded. There is a discussion on the pilot study, nature of the research, instrumentation and sampling. In chapter 4 data is presented, analysed and interpreted. In chapter 5 a summary of all the chapters is presented, conclusions about the findings are drawn and the recommendations are made. Finally, further research is suggested in this chapter.

## CHAPTER 2.

### (LITERATURE REVIEW).

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature based on the research findings and opinions expressed by various authorities regarding gender-related problems that female principals encounter on the job in South Africa and abroad. This field is one of the very few that has ever been researched. Only recently do we find this type of research gradually receiving serious attention in the United States of America, Great Britain and Australia. There is probably no significant research on female school leaders in South Africa and specific literature is therefore very scarce. As a result, foreign literature has been reviewed and generalized. There is much in common between South Africa and the other countries concerning this topic. It was also necessary to review literature on female leaders in other work places in South Africa and again because their experiences could be generalized.

Generally, females are underrepresented in school administration all over the world. Various reasons have been advanced why females are underrepresented in school administration. One of the reasons has been advanced by some of the pioneers in female issues in education in the United States of America, Adkinson (1981), Shakeshaft (1987) and Coursen, Mazzarella, Jeffress and Hadderman (1989). These researchers have found that the small number of

females in school administration was the result of a deliberate exclusion campaign which was waged against females by males. In other words females who aspired for school leadership positions were discriminated against.

Research claims that female school leaders do encounter an array of gender-related problems ( Marshall, 1992; Shakeshaft, Nowell and Perry, 1991 and Bell, and Chase, 1992 ). As a result their situation as school leaders is very different from that of their male counterparts. Mannheim (1993 ) and Bossert et al. (1982 ) for example, claim that female school leaders exhibit different leadership styles as a result of those problems. Research findings of the study conducted in Great Britain by Hall (1994 ) concur with these findings in the United States of America that female school leaders do encounter gender-related problems on the job. So far it is only Goldring and Chen (1992) who claim that in Israel female school leaders do not experience any gender-related problems on the job simply because school leadership has already been feminized. Israeli females are, therefore, as the majority school leaders, experiencing a new set of problems and challenges altogether.

In chapter 1 it has become clear that any study on gender issues inevitably lends itself in two controversial debates, and now literature does seem to confirm these debates. In the first place, the study lends itself in the controversy surrounding the century old debate about differences between men and women. Many researchers and authorities on female studies agree on the existence of the differences between men and women, but they advance



conflicting theories and reasons for what really causes those differences. In some theories gender is seen as a major determinant of the differences, that is, it is claimed that the biological differences between men and women have a bearing on what an individual does or does not do. Recent research findings by Shakeshaft (1987) however, indicate that the differences between men and women have their origin in the way both of them are socialized as they grow up. These findings take the view that females are traditionally taught to please and to serve men as young girls. This then develops into a socialization instinct that girls grow up with, and as they grow into adults they tend to avoid doing certain things because they think that they would be acting in an unfeminine way in doing so. This finding stages a major upset in the previous claim that maintained that men and women have biological instincts that bring about the difference between them. As a result of this finding, for the first time it was discovered that men and women are basically alike and that whatever difference there is, is the results of what other humans intend them to be.

Secondly, a study of this nature lends itself in the controversy surrounding the debate as to what constitutes successful leadership, and in this particular case school leadership or principalship for men and women. Men having been socially advantaged over women, seem to have the monopoly of the definitions of what constitutes successful school leadership. Again, men being the majority in school leadership set standards and expectations of the position of a school leader. In this instance it is understood that perceptions that are acquired in the course of socialization are the major determinants of what is understood by school



leadership.

## 2.2. GENDER-RELATED PROBLEMS.

Gender-related problems that female principals experience as discussed in this chapter are very much interrelated. The problems have been placed into six categories. The problems cover issues relating to lack of support, lack of encouragement, resentment and discrimination. The discussion under a separate heading, as the succeeding paragraphs will show, has been done so in order to arrive at a proper understanding.

### 2.2.1. THE IMPACT OF SOCIALIZATION.

Socialization has got to do with the manner in which societies inculcate norms and values of their own to the individuals. In many societies girls and boys undergo a different socialization process. The socialization of girls disadvantages them over the boys because they are socialized to serve men. In fact they are made to believe that women are inferior to men. The socialization of girls does not recognize their leadership potential, that is, it does not envisage that one day as they reach adulthood they would be required to assume leadership positions.

According to Shakeshaft (1987) a leadership role is anathema for the female because her socialization does not make her administratively inclined. As a principal, the female brings with her a set of internal conflicts to the job as a result of her earlier socialization (Erickson, 1985). The influence of socialization is bound to have negative impact on anything she does

or does not do. The worst is that even those who hire her and those with whom she interacts as a school leader have been socialized to believe that she does not possess the necessary qualities to lead. They have been made to believe that qualities that are needed to manage a school are antithetical to those qualities frequently associated with females (Shakeshaft, 1987). Societies label competence behaviour 'male'. Consequently, for a female principal, discharging her duties is problematic. She must choose to be either competent, in this case behaving like a male, and risk her femininity or to be incompetent and retain that femininity.

This dilemma, according to Shakeshaft (1987) surely puts two strong and interconnected identities in conflict. While the same role conflict could be said of the male principal, this cannot constitute a gender issue at all because he is socialized in a manner that prepares him for a leadership role. The male is prepared to lead the female. By the time the male assumes a leadership position, he is by no means a complete stranger to the game. The impact of socialization constitutes a gender issue for the female principal because it disadvantages her as a leader. On account of her socialization she finds herself unable to perform freely.

#### 2.2.2. LACK OF FREEDOM TO ADOPT A LEADERSHIP STYLE OF OWN CHOICE.

Principals make use of a variety of styles in the course of performing their duties from time to time. Although leadership styles differ from person to person and from situation to situation, female principals appear to be confined to a limited range of these styles. And worse still, the style that they so choose must be seen to be in keeping with their gender.

Eagly et al. (1992), conducting research among male and female principals of public schools in the United States, found that female principals prefer common leadership styles. These researchers also found that the female principals' choice of those unique leadership styles was not out of free choice, but was as a result of psychological pressure placed on them. This means that the female principal is not in a position to exercise her individual preference of a leadership style as her male colleague. These researchers claim that female principals prefer a more democratic or participatory leadership styles simply because they want to earn respect of and confidence of people who are sceptical about their ability as leaders. They do it in order to ensure that they do not push their acceptability level further down. Eagly et al.'s study also shows that female principals do not want to be authoritative and directive because they fear that this might exacerbate the erosion of their authority. They proceed in a participative and collaborative mode in accomplishing their managerial tasks because that is the best and less disruptive way. Their main concern is to ameliorate relations and ward off criticism.

Some people might argue that female principals tend to adopt these leadership styles because by nature they are timid and lack the necessary initiatives. Jones (1990) for example, claim that there are many researchers who have documented that men and women behave differently because of their gender. The argument here is that gender difference influences almost every domain of behaviour. Gender is singularly regarded as an explanatory variable in the perception and behaviour of men and women. Bolman and Deal (1992) and Shakeshaft et al. (1991) have made findings that refute the gender variable explanation. Bolman et al.

(1992) investigated how the cognitive orientations of school administrators in the United States and Singapore compare and have found that those in comparable positions were more alike than different. This finding assumes that differences that might be exhibited have their external origin and would have nothing to do with the gender of the person. Shakeshaft et al. (1991) of the United States have found that the differences that might be observed on female school leaders is the result of all those negative perceptions that impact on the female principal. In other words, being born female or male does not in itself determine how a person will act as a worker, but that it is the way a person is treated either as a male or as a female. That is what actually influences the behaviour of that person as a leader. It is therefore true that a female principal is inclined to adopt a leadership style that suits sexual perceptions about her. This is not the case with the male principal.

### 2.2.3. THE MALES' NEGATIVE PERCEPTION OF THE FEMALE.

Males whether they be those with whom the female principal works or those in the larger community have negative attitudes towards women leaders. Negative attitudes have their origin in myths that they hold against them. It is the perpetuation of these myths that give rise to the attitude of undermining and not appreciating female leaders (Stead, 1978). As a result it is difficult for female principals to earn respect from males in general (Mertz, Grossnickle and Tutchter, 1980). The male bias against the female principal causes anxiety, especially where a female works with a predominantly male staff. The following is a set of myths that

males have about female leaders.

- (a) They are too slow to act; too emotional and hysterical and they, therefore, cannot lead ( Wyatt et al., 1992 ).
- (b) They are good for child-caring and as such they cannot lead adults (Pope, 1993).
- (c) They lack emotional stability; they are irrational, have weak personalities and are unable to handle responsible positions ( Myers, 1993).

While female principals are seen as emotionally unstable and lacking in self-reliance, male principals on the contrary are seen to be intelligent and in general, more competent. Men are seen to be more assertive than women. According to Marshall (1992) males think that a female principal does not value achievement, promotion and meaningful work and that generally she is passive and intuitive.

In most cases female principals are not in a position to challenge those myths that men hold about them, again because of socialization. Those that try to challenge those myths by trying to be authoritative, argumentative, directive, assertive and daring as is believed of males, find themselves rejected and isolated ( Marshall, 1992). Such female principals are often called by derogatory names. They are not appreciated by both men and women. A female principal performs under tremendous pressure. She is always overwhelmed by a host of negative perceptions that undermine her leadership potential. It is always difficult for a female principal to rise above these negative perceptions.

#### 2.2.4. SEX ROLE STEREOTYPING.

Sex role stereotypes dictate that men and women perform different and unequal roles. Sex role stereotyping for women is an affront to leadership. Sex role stereotyping dictates that women must serve men, be passive followers, be submissive and do household chores. Sex role stereotyping governs interaction between men and women, govern etiquettes and general conduct of people (Stead, 1978). Once a female is appointed principal, she suddenly finds herself doing work which is initially not meant for her. Her leadership potential is by nature of her upbringing undermined.

#### 2.2.5. SCHOOLS AS ORGANIZATIONS FAVOUR MALE PRINCIPALS.

Schools are societal organization that are run according to certain principles and policies. The principal is, for example, a community leader and is required to perform certain functions within the community even after the normal office hours. A female principal finds it difficult to do so by the nature of things.

Marshall (1992), researching on the values of schools in the United States, found that schools' organization and their activities are arranged in such a way that females find it difficult to work as leaders. The general setup and activities involved are based on the assumption that there would be male principals only. Schools as organizations entrench masculine ethics in the minds of those who work in them. School administrations still seek

principals with traits assumed to belong to men such as tough minded approach to problems. This is perpetuated in spite of recent research that indicates that principals do not have to have tough minds in order to run schools. According to Stead (1978) it is no longer the ideal for a school leader to exercise authority and parade power in a situation where goals set are that of the group. Control of individual behaviour is now a fallacy in school leadership. Female principals should have been credited for their leadership style that is conducive to school leadership than condemned and disadvantaged.

The setup of the school as an organization militates against the female principal. As a leader she is at times not so certain of what best to do. Marshall (1992) calls this uncertainty on the part of the female principal as dilemmas, and has come up with four examples of those.

- Dilemma to supervise and evaluate male teachers (p.370).
- Dilemma to help students after school hours (p.370).
- Dilemma arising from parent pressure (p.370).
- Loyalty dilemma that has to do with challenges to authority and assertion of power (p.370).

While female principals struggle with these kinds of dilemmas, their male counterparts do not because they find schools offering them opportunities to work with their subordinates with the greater status accorded them in the larger society (Glazer, 1991). Their behaviour as school leaders is generally acceptable.



### 2.2.6. WORKING WITH TEACHERS AS A PROBLEM.

This is one of the major problematic areas for the female principal. Gender expectations have bearing on how she interacts with those she supervises (Shakeshaft, 1989). What she speaks with the teachers is often interpreted differently by the male and the female teachers.

Interaction of the female principal between the male and the female teacher is different.

Granted this is just natural, but for the female principal it is not. In the previous paragraphs it was indicated that males undermine the ability of the female leader, and so it is the same with the male teachers. It is precisely because of their negative conduct towards her that she in turn acts differently towards them. Male teachers exhibit a hostile attitude when dealing with a female principal implicitly and explicitly. Mandraj (1994), investigating experiences of secondary school female principals in Kwazulu-Natal, found that female principals have to consciously work much harder in order to get the male teachers to hear them. Proof that male teachers adopt negative attitude towards female principals are found even here in South Africa. They expect the female principal to listen to them. Mandraj has also found that male teachers do not accept to work under a female principal and, therefore, are reluctant to take instructions from her. According to Mandraj (1994) for a new female principal, working with male teachers means that she must go through a number of image transformation stages because of the rejection. A new male principal is not subjected to the same transformation image. The female principal has to work hard in order to enhance her image as a result of the negative treatment she receives from the male teachers.



Physical appearance is another problem for the female principal. According to Shakeshaft (1989) it is an added burden of problems if a female principal has attractive physical features. Male teachers tend to see her as a sex object and the result is that she is compelled to behave in a manner that is not conducive for her role as a school leader. For example, if she is married, she always contemplates the possibility of endangering her marriage and, therefore, she finds it difficult to work closely with the male teachers. The issue of sexuality is a problem for the female principal because she always she has to be cautious about the attention from male teachers. When she receives some serious attention from a male teacher she is always not sure of the underlying message. So there is always this hidden message, and according to Erickson (1985) it is a burdensome unofficial issue that the female principal must deal with on the job. It must be remembered that her job description does not make distinction between her sexual ability and the demands of her position. When discharging her office duties she always finds herself confronted with the hidden agenda from the male teachers. According to Stead (1978) dealing with the male teachers is a serious problem for the female principal because the result is either she is not so sure of what to do or they the teachers miss what she is saying. In other words an attractive female distracts their attention.

Male teachers are said to be uncomfortable with taking instructions from a female leader because they feel threatened by a female who is strong and they think she is challenging their hegemony. They resent a strong female leader and would plot against her and sabotage school progress merely to prove that a female cannot make it. They also become aggressive

and intimidatory. There is also the issue of male power play when working with teachers.

Power play is linked to the attitude of the male teachers and the male deputy principal.

Erickson (1985) has found that the male teachers and the male deputy often team up against the female principal and usurp her powers and render her a mere symbolic head. A female principal is seen as a person who is not competent to exercise authority. Shakeshaft (1987) also found that male teachers have a tendency of wanting to dominate a female principal. the challenge of male teacher domination imposes limits upon her to perform. The male instincts for women domination originate from what Shakeshaft calls "Androcentrism".

Androcentrism is defined by Epp, Sackney and Kustaski (1994) as the practice of viewing the world and of shaping reality from the male perspective. Androcentrism elevates men and honours them above women. It considers masculine characteristics as universal and ideal. Androcentrism is the source of the belief in male superiority and a masculine value system.

Another problematic area in working with male teachers is in evaluation and feedback. When it comes to evaluation and feedback, Shakeshaft (1989) has found that female principals are less favourable than equally competent men. In feedback, male principals receive more feedback of more positive types than female principals. Female principals are often likely to get non-evaluative feedback as male teachers do not take them seriously. Another reason for withholding positive feedback is that they are jealousy of competent woman. According to Shakeshaft (1987) men discriminate more against competent women than against those who are not.

Although the primary determinants of any person's ability to influence group performance , particularly in a school situation would consist of the leader himself or herself , the group (teachers) and the situation, for a female principal the interaction of these variable pose certain limits. For a female principal to work with male teachers, especially if they are the majority, poses a serious threat. She might not be so sure as to how to go about her job in order to be successful.

The problem of working with the male teachers for the female principal is not her only plight, female teachers as well do not cooperate, again because they think that she is powerless.

Wyatt et al. (1992) found that female teachers resent working under a female principal when conducting a survey on problems that Black female school leaders experience in various parts of South Africa. The survey found that female teachers are also responsible for the perpetuation of the negative perception of female principals. As a result of their socialization, they undermine a leader who is of their own. They believe that a female principal is not capable of doing her work well. As the female principal is resisted even by her female colleagues she ultimately finds herself so lonesome and lacking the desired support. This isolation incapacitates her as a school leader.

#### 2.2.7 WORKING WITH STUDENTS AS A PROBLEM.

Students also pose a problem to a female principal , especially when it comes to discipline.

Wyatt et al. (1992) found that black female principals find it tough to work with male

students in particular. Male students threaten and intimidate the female principal. They are taught that a woman is inferior and is also physically weak. Female students also challenge the female principal because they think that she cannot exercise power. They also see her as a token. Discipline issues in respect of students are a major concern for the female principal. Mandraj (1994) also has findings that confirm that students do reject taking instructions from a female principal. Community attitude towards the female principal is reflected in the students' behaviour.

#### 2.2.8 COMMUNITY ATTITUDE AND CULTURE AS PROBLEMS.

Communities still prefer male principals over the female ones (Wyatt et al. 1992) and females are aware of this fact. According to Mandraj (1994) community attitudes impact negatively on the female principal's daily experiences. Her research findings in Durban indicated that the female principal of a secondary school experiences negative community attitudes ranging from contact with visitors, maintenance people, caretakers and parents. These people, on arriving on the school premises, are betrayed by their questions that they did not expect to meet a female principal. This then means that the female principal is not taken seriously by the community members. As a result the female principal might see herself as highly visible but without any substantial powers. Evans (1986) supports this by adding that the female principal might see herself as someone who is treated as a mere representative of a category of people rather than an individual. She may think that she is getting unnecessary attention and becoming a subject of gossip and rumour. This feeling accordingly causes undue

stress on the job for the female principal.

Erickson (1985) has found that female leaders do not react to specific situations but they instead react to cultural demands of feminine behaviour. Cultural demands link up with the question of stereotypes. Culture, particularly the African culture, make female principals consider themselves as social deviants. School leadership is actually a contradiction in terms according to the African culture because women are supposed to be followers and not leaders. A female principal is, therefore, culturally expected to shift her roles and personality on a daily basis in order to be acceptable. At school she is supposed to be a leader and also a very important community member, but as soon as it is school out, she is expected to be a follower and also a minor. Culturally the husband is the ruler and her master even if he may not have acquired the same educational qualifications as the wife. African culture impedes the advancement of African women. Gender discrimination is the way of life from birth to adulthood. In the past girls were not allowed to attend school. Vhavenda, for example, regarded girls as economic asserts (Maumela, 1967) and considered attending school for girls a waste of time.

In the African culture there is no equality between men and women. Female principals therefore do not have social settings in which to discuss school business. Their male counterparts have the privilege to do that. Erickson (1985) regards this as a conflict that a female principal encounters on two fronts, namely the job and the home. In order to attend a conference of principals, a married female principal, for example, would have to obtain

permission from her husband . This is surely what a male principal does not experience because he is the one from whom permission must be sought by the wife or the partner.

#### 2.2.9. LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT AND THE BURDEN OF WORKLOAD.

Tradition dictates that females perform household chores and not males. This position is not expected to change even if the female assumes a position of more responsibility at school. Family members still expect her to perform her role as a family person. When she arrives home after school everybody waits for her to prepare food. If she does not have daughters or other females who can assist her then she would have a serious problem. As proof that female principals do experience problems with family responsibilities and their work demands, Pigford et al. (1993) have indicated that people often ask how a married female principal copes with the enormous tasks at home and at school. With the obvious lack of support by family members with family chores, the female principal is faced with an unfair workload as a leader. She experiences adjustment problem of role status conflict on the job (Stead, 1978). She has more demanding responsibilities than her male counterpart. Shakeshaft (1989) summarized it all when she said,

" Home and family responsibilities provide obstacles for women in administration in two ways: The woman not only must effectively juggle all of her tasks, she must contend with the bulk of male school board presidents who erroneously believe that not only is she unable to manage



the balancing act but that it is inappropriate for her to even attempt it " (p. 113).

Van Nostrand (1993) confirms that it is indeed a problem for the female principal to perform the act of balancing home and family responsibilities. It is stressful to do so. In some African communities, a married female principal is in a worst situation because it is in fact a taboo for the husband to be seen sharing the kitchen work with the wife or to attend to the care of their small children by way of changing nappies. The female principal has got more work to do at home that affects her performance as a school leader. This is not the case with the male principal.

#### 2.2.10. LACK OF ROLE MODELS.

In the previous chapters it was indicated that female principals are under represented in school administration. It follows that the few who are principals lack role models. They do not have enough of their own to look upon as models. Metzger (1985), writing about her own experiences as the first female school administrator in the Arizona district in the United States, stated that lack of other females who could serve as role models was one of her major problems. The female principal needs a role model to look upon. It is natural for leaders to feel comfortable in their positions whenever there are other successful leaders around them. The female principal also needs to see other successful school administrators around her in order to imitate, but this is not possible because female school administrators are very scarce.

Pigford et al. (1993) agree that lack of role models is a problem for the female principal, and they consider this as a major cause of lack of confidence in themselves. Pigford et al. conclude this by stating that,

" Without the presence of a sufficient number of successful women in administrative positions, women who might aspire to such positions are likely to assume that only females who are exceptionally talented and skilful can be successful. " (p.12).

On the question of the lack of role models, Shakeshaft (1987) adds that it is compounded by a further lack of appropriate and positive circular material for them to read. Female principals lack literature to read about other females in a variety of leadership positions. They are not in a position to hear how other females describe their experiences. Consequently the female principals find themselves patterning after the males, and this poses a problem.

#### 2.2.11. SELF-IMAGE.

Black female school leaders have expressed that they have the fear and the expectation of failure. They think that they are not good enough to run schools (Wyatt et al. 1992). This is because they are not well respected like their male counterparts. In the presence of males the female principals exhibit the inferiority complex. They tend to doubt their own ability and withdraw from participating actively. They do not know how best to behave as leaders as people tend to hold different views about them. According to Pigford et al. (1993), a female



principal is unfairly held in different perceptions, for example:

- If she is single, she is perceived as being insufficiently family-oriented, implying that she cannot be relied upon as a school leader. (p. 13).
- If she is married she is seen as too work loaded, and therefore cannot cope well with added responsibilities of school leadership. (p.12).
- If she is divorced, she is seen as having no sense of family, and her ability to run a school is consequently questioned . (p.13).

These are the kinds of perceptions that tend to affect the female principal's negative perception of the self. According to Sebakwane (1993) the negative image of the female leader is actually built at the time she is still an ordinary teacher because it is there where she is perceived as inferior by her male teacher colleagues. The negative self-image of the female is also linked to the question of the socialization process as has been discussed in the preceding paragraphs. It is clear now that sex-role stereotyping has pervaded cultures and continues to produce people who also continue functioning within the parameters of their socialization. In the case of females, the socialization process is restrictive, and narrow.

### 2.3. SUMMARY.

Literature findings confirm that female principals do not only encounter hardships at the time of applying for the post of principalship, but do live with more and even complicated hardships on the job. Literature review has identified a number of problems that are generally encountered and suffered by the female principals. Female principals suffer those problems

on the job not because of their weakness but simply because of their gender. It is clear from the literature that if there are male principals who do suffer similar problems that have been identified, that would be mainly out of own choice because their sex is an advantage to them. Female principals encounter an array of gender-related problems on the job in respect of community, parents, teachers, students and higher authorities. Literature has indicated that working in an environment which was reserved for males is threatening for women.

The origin of gender-related problems for the female principals can be traced back to a society that supports and enforces a male-dominated system that results in the leadership of females being undermined. Undoubtedly, it is quite natural that not all the problems that have so far been identified by literature are equally prohibitive, but as Shakeshaft (1987) has noted, in an androcentric society, an array of practices converge and create serious problems for the female school leader. It is true that there are researchers who maintain that female school leaders are themselves responsible for what they are because naturally they have been incapacitated. Shakeshaft (1987) has indicated that there are such researchers. Fauth (1984) is one of those who claim that male teachers, for example, do work comfortably with the female principal. But the truth of the matter is that the general research findings indicate that female principals have unique problems on the job which their male counterparts do not have. Of particular concern is the perception of the males about them. General literature confirms the view that female principals are exposed to certain common experiences and that their role as school leaders is characterized by conflict and gender divisions.

## CHAPTER 3.

### (METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN)

#### 3.1. INTRODUCTION.

This chapter deals with the methodology design of this research. As already stated in chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to investigate gender-related problems that female principals perceive they experience on the job in schools in Venda. The study sought to answer one question, namely,

" What are the gender-related problems that female principals  
perceive they encounter in schools in Venda?

The answers were sought by way of asking female principals to describe their feelings and opinions. This chapter discusses the pilot study and the nature of the study. Instrumentation, the sample, method of analysing data and other procedures involved are provided.

#### 3.2. METHODOLOGY DESIGN AND PROCEDURES.

##### 3.2.1. PILOT STUDY.

The research question as described above, implied that the researcher should attend to the following matters:

- a) Determining the sample and the location thereof.
- b) Determining and testing procedures that would be involved in conducting the

research.

- c) Ensuring that the research instrument should elicit appropriate and honest responses.

All this was achieved by way of a pilot study. To start the process, application letters for permission to conduct research were sent to the then Education Headquarters at Makwarela ( see appendices A and B ). After permission had been granted letters for notification and for requesting assistance were sent to the six Inspection Area Offices in Venda, namely, Mutale, Mutshundudi, Nzhelele, Thohoyandou, Tshitandani and Vuwani. (See appendices C and D ).

The 1994 school statistics from the Department of Education revealed the following in respect of the number of principals in schools in Venda. ( See tables I, II and III.)

TABLE I.

The number of primary school principals in the sub-region Venda according to sex.

AREA	Total number	Male number	Female number	%
Mutale	88	70	18	20.5
Mutshundudi	87	56	31	35.7
Nzhelele	88	60	28	31.9
Thohoyandou	77	47	30	39.0
Tshitandani	69	43	26	37.7
Vuwani	68	41	27	39.8
Totals	477	317	160	33.6

Source: Department of Education 1994 Statistics: Makwarela.

TABLE II.

The number of secondary school principals according to sex in the sub-region Venda.

AREA	Total number rB	Male number	Female number	%
Mutale	27	27	0	0
Mutshundudi	31	31	0	0
Nzhelele	39	36	3	7.7
Thohoyandou	37	37	0	0
Tshitandani	30	28	2	6.7
Vuwani	35	34	1	2.9
Totals	199	193	6	3.0

Source: Department of Education 1994 Statistics: Makwarela.

TABLE III.

The number of primary and secondary school principals according to sex in the sub-region Venda.

AREA	Total number	Total males	Total females	%
Mutale	115	97	18	15.7
Mutshundudi	118	87	31	26.3
Nzhelele	127	96	31	24,5
Thohoyandou	114	84	30	26.4
Tshitandani	99	71	28	28.3
Vuwani	103	75	28	27.2
Totals	676	510	166	24,6

Source: Department of Education 1994 statistics: Makwarela.

The number of female principals was used to determine the sample. By way of a questionnaire administered to 10 female and 10 male principals in the Nzhelele Inspection Area, the researcher determined the academic and professional qualifications; manner of appointment; career paths; staff composition and school enrolment of principals. Information received indicated that female principals were academically and professionally better qualified than the male principals, and yet they remain under represented as principals. Information also revealed that females were kept longer as principals than males and that teaching staff composition was in keeping with the sex of the principal, that is, a female principal has a majority of female teachers and vice versa.

The research instrument was piloted. It was administered to 10 female principals again in the Nzhelele Inspection Area. Data gathered revealed the following:

- a) Questions were better handled when placed into six categories.
- b) Questions that tended to discriminate other female principals on the grounds of aspects such as marital status were eliminated or reworded.
- c) It was not necessary to include female principals of Junior Primary schools in the sample since some questions would have been irrelevant to them because at their level there is an absolute majority of female teachers.
- d) There was need for a follow-up after the instrument has been administered by way of an interview. The interview would help to make responses much clearer.
- e) Gender-related problems in schools existed.



### 3.2.2. NATURE OF THE RESEARCH.

As this research relied on how the participants describe their feelings and opinions, at the end of the day it was a question of comparing figures and determining how many have given more or less similar descriptions. A follow-up to the descriptions were made by way of conducting interviews. In this way clarifications of certain items in the questionnaire were provided. This research is therefore a descriptive survey one. Gay (1981) describes a descriptive research as a research procedure that involves data gathering with the aim of testing a hypothesis or to answer questions that concern the current status of the subject being studied. In descriptive research things are determined and studied as they are. Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) concur with Gay when they state that descriptive studies describe a given state of affairs as carefully as possible. In this research, the following three characteristics of survey as described by Fraenkel et al. (1993) were considered.

- a) Information was collected from a group of people in order to describe some aspects or characteristics of the population of which that group of people is a member. Such aspects or characteristics could be opinions, beliefs, knowledge etc.
- b) The main way in which information was collected was through asking questions, and the answers to the questions by the members of the group constituted the data of the study.
- c) Information was collected from a sample rather than from every member of the population.

### 3.2.3. INSTRUMENTATION.

In this research the questionnaire and the interview were used as research tools for the collection of data. According to Gay (1981) descriptive research mainly uses questionnaire survey and interviews or observations for collecting data. This is the view that is also held by Fraenkel et al. (1993) who consider that a research that deals with perceptions must obtain relevant and reliable data through the questionnaire and the interview.

The research instrument was developed from the survey findings of the "TOPS Needs Assessment Programme for the Black female school leaders in South Africa" ( this has been acknowledged ) and the general literature in South Africa and abroad. The interview was an unstructured one as it was conducted based on the responses given.

The questionnaire comprised of six categories of questions (see appendix F). Each category consists of subquestions. The total number of questions is 21. The purpose of the research instrument was to determine if female principals in Venda experience gender-related problems. The female principal indicates the problem on a four point scale given as follows: N/A ( not applicable ) = 0, NONE = 1, MINOR = 2, MAJOR = 3. The rating to be indicated by making a circle around the corresponding number. The questionnaire was administered to 62 female principals of Senior Primary and Secondary schools in the six Inspection Areas of Venda.

#### 3.2.4. SAMPLING

The population of this study consists of 166 female principals of public schools in Venda as shown in table III. Only female principals of Senior Primary and those of Secondary Schools were targeted for this research due to the fact that they were the ones who could give appropriate responses to all the questions. Their number now stood at 62 and it was controllable in view of the fact that they spread throughout the entire Venda. Besides, the number was also representative enough of the female principal population of Venda. The sample was herefore manageable, and also its inclusivity ensured that it included any characteristics of individuals in the population.

In order to identify female principals of Senior Primary and Secondary Schools, it was necessary to visit all Inspection Areas in Venda. Area Managers provided a list of names of the female principals of the schools (see table IV).

TABLE IV.

## AREA

AREA	Total number of principals of Senior Primary Schools	Total number of Secondary School principals
Mutale	12	-
Mutshundudi	7	-
Nzhelele	19	3
Thohoyandou	9	-
Tshitandani	9	2
Vuwani	10	1
TOTALS	72	6

Number of targeted female principals by Area.

The interview was conducted with 10 targeted female principals selected at random in the Inspection Areas. The purpose of the interview was to get clarity from the participants by asking questions that elicited verbal comments. As the interview progressed this sample was reduced to 5 because more or less similar responses were now received.

### 3.2.5. PROCEDURE WITH REGARD TO CONTACTS.

Following the April 27 first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, the so-called homelands were dissolved, but smooth transition dictated that certain structures such as education remained under the control of the previous administrations. As a result the administration of education in Venda remained at Makwarela although Venda itself had already become part of the new Northern Province. As such the researcher directed applications for permission to conduct research to the administration at Makwarela. Permission was granted and then the researcher informed the Area Managers by letter and also requested for assistance.

In order to facilitate delivery of the questionnaire, it became necessary to obtain lists of names of the female principals of schools and their school and home addresses. Questionnaires were either sent by post or left at the Area Office for delivery to the principals. The questionnaire was accompanied by a letter requesting participation and also explaining the necessary procedures (see appendix G). The letter bore the name of the principal and that of the school so as to make it imperative for the principal to personally respond. This was also to ensure

### 3.4. SUMMARY.

This chapter has discussed the methodology employed in this study. The following about the pilot study have been made clear:

- Rationale for it.
- Its major findings.
- Its impact on the research.

The nature of this study which is a descriptive survey has been given. The instruments used to gather information have been explained. Finally, the manner in which data was analysed and interpreted was expounded.

## CHAPTER 4.

(DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION).

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION.

In this chapter data gathered is presented and then analysed and interpreted. Analysis is done question by question. Interpretation is based on literature findings in chapter 2.

### 4.2. DATA PRESENTATION.

#### 4.2.1. PRESENTATION OF RETURNS.

Figures presented here are that of 48 (77.4 %) out of 62 participants. The returns are shown Area by Area (see table V).

TABLE V.

AREA	Total expected	Total returned	%	Total not returned	%
Mutale	12	8	66.7	4	33.3
Mutshundudi	6	6	100	-	-
Nzhelele	14	11	78.6	3	21.4
Thohoyandou	9	6	66.7	3	33.3
Tshitandani	10	8	80	2	20
Vuwani	11	9	81.8	2	18.2
TOTALS	62	48	77.4	14	22.6

Return of questionnaires by Area.



## 4.2.2. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS.

TYPE OF PROBLEM	N/	%	NON	%	MIN	%	MA	%
SELF-CONCEPT								
1. Feeling of tokenism.			8	16.7	30	62.5	10	20.8
2. Lack of confidence			15	31.2	24	50	9	18.8
FAMILY AND SCHOOL								
3. Role conflict			8	16.7	12	25	28	58.3
COMMUNITY ATTITUDES								
4. Community not preferring a female principal			6	12.5	31	64.6	11	22.9
5. Parents and school governing bodies disliking a female principal.			27	56.2	14	29.2	7	14.6
6. Female principals are stereotyped.			7	14.6	33	68.7	8	16.7
STAFF AND MALE COUNTERPARTS..								
7. Female principal's bossy			8	16.7	35	72.9	5	10.4
8. Female principals are emotional and hysterical			7	14.6	29	60.4	12	25
9. Male teachers threaten a female principal	2	4.2	2	4.2	5	10.4	39	81.2
10. Male teachers dominate a female principal	2	4.2	4	8.3	4	8.3	38	79.2
11. Male teachers are aggressive toward a female principal	2	4.2	5	10.4	4	8.3	37	77.1

12. Male teachers see a female principal as a sex object	2	4.2	20	41.6	18	37.5	8	16.7
13. Teachers not eager to take instructions from a female principal			18	37.5	23	47.9	7	14.6
14. Female teachers also resist the female principal.			18	37.5	22	45.8	8	16.7
15. Lack of freedom to associate with male counterparts			19	39.5	21	43.8	8	16.7
16. Male counterparts not encouraging the female principal			4	8.3	31	64.6	13	27.1
STUDENTS DESPISING THE AUTHORITY OF THE FEMALE PRINCIPAL								
17. Students resent authority of the female principal			4	8.3	10	20.8	34	70.8
18. Male students refuse to be disciplined by a female principal			6	12.5	13	27.1	29	60.4
DISCRIMINATION BY THE HIGHER AUTHORITIES								
19. Senior officials discriminate against a female principal			14	29.2	10	20.8	24	50
20. Senior officials not ready for mentoring of a female principal			8	16.7	10	20.8	30	62.5
21. Sexual harassment by senior officials			8	16.7	8	16.7	32	66.6

### 4.3. DATA INTERPRETATION.

There is correlation between the literature claims and the data gathered.

#### CATEGORY ON SELF-IMAGE PROBLEMS.

Literature has indicated that female principals have a negative self image of themselves as a result of external perceptions that they internalize and bring along to work. Literature indicated that female principals do lack confidence and tend to withdraw. 62.5% of the respondents think that they are taken as tokens, and 20.8% think that this is a major issue. Tokenism is mainly visible in the secondary schools. There are only 6 secondary school female principals in the whole of Venda, and of these 6, only 2 are principals of schools with standard 10. Females therefore feel that they are appointed to these positions for convenience purposes only. It is also as if they are on an experiment. Those who appoint females always ensure that they hire a male deputy, confirming the view that females are not able persons. These deputies invariably are de facto principals. Female principals in Venda do feel that they are not appreciated. Either they withdraw in self-pity or they try to show some kind of aggressiveness in order to make others feel that they are there.

50% think that lack of confidence is a problem for the female principal, and 18.8% consider this as a major issue. According to literature, females principals lack the necessary confidence to be able to perform their work well. But the truth of the matter is that the female principals lack confidence because of the distorted perceptions about them. Female principals

in Venda have internalized many negative perceptions about themselves. They project these perceptions at work. They try to avoid initiating anything original for fear of criticism should they not succeed. True, any unsuccessful attempt would evoke remarks such as "What can a woman do which is right after all? "

#### CATEGORY ON ROLE CONFLICT PROBLEMS.

58.3 % think that role conflict between home and school is a major problem. Literature has stressed that female principals suffer the heavy load of work and find their work at home and at school contradictory in terms. In Venda, the majority of female principals have families, in fact most of them are married. They complain of lack of support by families, especially with household chores in the morning and in the evening and over the week-end. After a hectic day at school she is still expected to ensure that every member of the family is well fed. This is the time when the husband is usually relaxed and waiting for food to be prepared. To be a school leader means to have heavy added responsibility for the female principal. This causes a lot of stress at work. Worse still is when the husband or partner starts to be jealous of her achievements and enters in a power struggle. Usually husbands or male partners do not feel comfortable when the female progresses.

#### CATEGORY ON COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AS A PROBLEM.

64.6 % of the respondents have indicated that they encounter problems with the community,

and 22.9 % find this a major issue. Literature has indicated that communities still prefer male principals over the female ones and that as a result female principals find it difficult to work in a hostile environment

In Venda, problems with the community stem from the fact that communities are largely still too traditional and backward in terms of modern development. Communities are still controlled by traditional leaders who demand observance of traditions. One of these traditions, unfortunately is that women should serve men. The female principal is seen as a person who violates traditional norms of the tribe. In Venda, communities still associate characteristics such as timidity, cowardice, talkativeness, emotionality and many others with women. It is not uncommon to call a man a woman if it is believed that he is displaying any of those characteristics associated with women. Communities do not expect schools headed by females to have good results because the leadership of the female is always undermined. In Venda, female principals have to absorb a lot of criticism, for example, at parents' meetings they hear a lot of sexist remarks being levelled against them. Many parents, especially male parents, regard the female principals as soft targets because when, for instance, there is a problem concerning a student, the parent does not hesitate to come to school personally and confront the principal aggressively. These parents do not do like this to the male principal.

Female principals in Venda lack social opportunities and social settings to discuss school business. This is mainly because she is not expected to be seen in the company of men after school and she is expected to be at home. Interaction with the community members of the

school of which she is head is very limited. The social setup is an affront to the female principals in Venda. Male principals are free to mix with the community members after school and they go home when it pleases them because invariably they have no work to do in terms of family chores. The female principal in Venda finds performing her duties as a school leader stressful simply because of her gender.

#### CATEGORY CONCERNING STAFF AND MALE COUNTERPARTS.

Female principals in Venda have indicated that they encounter problems with staff and also with their male counterparts. In this respect, teacher threats (81.2 %), followed by domination by the male teachers (79.2 %) are the major ones. Being seen as a sex object 37.5% minor and 16.7 % major. Resistance by the male teachers was 47.9% minor and 14.6% major. Female teachers resisting was 45.8% minor and 16.7% major. Lack of freedom to associate with other male principals 43.8% minor and 16.7% major.

Literature indicates that female principals find it difficult to work with teachers, male teachers in particular, all because of their sex. Female principals in Venda have confirmed literature findings. Female principals have expressed that staff lack confidence in them. Male teachers do not accept a female principal. Either they exploit her or resist her outright. This causes strained relations. Male teachers in Venda still believe in male superiority, in fact that is what their environment demands. Male teachers in Venda come to school and demand a lot of recognition from the female principal. They do not want to see themselves serving under a



female principal. They see a female as a person who is there to satisfy their needs and when a female is now the leader, they perceive this as a reversal of roles. They cannot see sense in this and quite often, the female principal's behaviour is interpreted as bossy. A strong woman is resented.

In Venda, female teachers do not support the female principal. She is isolated and resisted. Sometimes these teachers simply become jealous of the principal. They tend to compete with her because they feel that they have things in common. They know that only men are leaders. Also, female principals do not communicate well in their job because they feel restricted in communicating with their male counterparts.

#### CATEGORY ON STUDENTS' PROBLEMS.

70.8 % have indicated that students resent female principal's authority and they find this a major issue. 60.4 % have indicated that male students in particular refuse to be disciplined by a female principal and they also find this a major problem.

Literature has indicated that female principals experience problems with students, especially when it comes to discipline. In Venda, boys are culturally encouraged to perceive women females as minors. The traditional schools that they attend teach them that women are weak, powerless and emotional. They expect to see the same in the modern schools. They know how their mothers are treated at home and expect the same of the female principal. Boys resent being disciplined by a person they regard as a minor, they would rather be disciplined

by a male whom they respect out of fear. In Venda, boys, like the male teachers, resent the female principal and use intimidation and threats. Girls, like the female teachers, think that the female principal is powerless.

#### CATEGORY ON PROBLEMS WITH HIGHER AUTHORITIES.

The following problems are major issues among the female principals in Venda:

discrimination practices by senior officials 50 % MAJOR, those high in authority not availing themselves for mentoring 62.5 % MAJOR and sexual harassment 66,6 MAJOR.

Literature has indicated that those high in authority discriminate against the female principals in terms of ignoring and giving them second class treatment. In Venda, discrimination of female principals manifests itself in sexual harassment, passing them over for promotion and personal abuse.

#### 4.4. SUMMARY

In this chapter, data has been presented, analysed and interpreted. the findings indicate that female principals in schools in Venda do encounter an array of gender-related problems. The suffering of the following category of problems have been confirmed:

- a) Low or negative self-image which inhibits the female principals from being initiative and creative in their job as school leaders.
- b) Role conflict resulting in the female principal being piled with a lot of work and also



being confused as a school leader.

- c) Community distorted perceptions that result in strained relations and stressful work.
- d) Staff resistance that also results in strained relations and stressful job performance.
- e) Students resistance that results in the female principal's inability to ensure students discipline.
- f) Discrimination by those in higher authority that affects effective job performance.

## CHAPTER 5.

### (CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS).

#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter conclusions on the findings are made. The chapter also looks into the recommendations for implementation concerning gender-related problems that have been discovered that affect the female principals in schools in Venda. Suggestions for further research are also made in this chapter.

#### 5.2. CONCLUSIONS.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the experiences of the female principals in view of cultural and traditional practices that are biased against them. The researcher was also encouraged to investigate female principals' experiences in view of the fact that females have to pass through a host of factors that militate against them in order to assume a leadership position. These factors include: male bias during interviews; lack of self confidence; the feeling that one is violating one's role as a woman and isolation. This research has now established that there are negative experiences that await a female principal immediately after promotion. These experiences are a stumbling-block towards successful principalship. The truth is that gender issues worsen for the female principal after promotion. It takes extra wisdom and courage for the female principal to lead her school effectively as she has two

battles to fight. She must struggle with common professional demands of her job like any principal on the one hand and struggle with gender discrimination that tend to hamper her effective functioning on the other hand.

This research has established that female principals in Venda schools lead their schools under difficult and strenuous circumstances. With these findings, one can conclude that the South African female principals, blacks in particular, are coping with a set of hardships that add to the burden of the demands of their job. Instead of facing their day to day challenges of their job, they find themselves faced with questions dealing with who they are in terms of their gender. The social division between sexes impacts negatively on the female principal.

With these findings, one concludes that female principals of rural schools are in a worst situation than those in the semi-urban and urban areas. It is in these rural areas where those African traditions that oppress women are still in their crude form. It is in these areas where leadership is still regarded as a prerogative of males. A woman who happens to assume a leadership position is not taken seriously. The findings have validated the research question and the assumption that female principals in Venda schools do encounter gender-related problems on the job.

### 5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS.

With all the findings as presented in chapter 4 in mind, this study would like to make certain recommendations. These recommendations are supported by various authorities on women

school leadership such as Shakeshaft (1989), Pigford et al. (1993), Pope (1992), Wyatt et al. (1992). This study suggests strategies that must be initiated by the female leaders themselves and education practitioners and policy makers.

According to Prekel (n.d.), understanding by the females themselves is the best remedy. Female principals need to understand that most problems that they encounter have their origin in culture and tradition. They need to understand that people have traditions that they perpetuate without realizing that they are hurting others. According to Prekel (n.d.), understanding will help the female in handling those problems rationally and more effectively. When she understands why certain people behave like that towards her she will challenge them constructively.

Female principals should start to demand their basic rights at work. They must demand promotion. They need not relax and expect further promotion without being vociferous about it themselves. They must realize that men are quite comfortable when they work with one of their own. Female principals must therefore be prepared to fight. They must be prepared to confront this hostile world in which they find themselves. They need to fight this collection of self defeating attitudes within themselves most of which, according to Prekel (n.d.) are grafted onto the females by their families and society as part of their socialization.

To minimize or eliminate problems that female principals experience on the job there is a need to have legislation that is aimed at changing certain structures of our society. Educational,

political and legal methods that have been in operation and have been oppressive of the females should be changed. If these structures that perpetuate oppression of the females are dismantled, then we can expect the females to change their traditional roles that are in essence an affront to leadership. The advance of democracy means that our traditional way of life should be revisited. Democracy is a package and it should be adopted with all those aspects that are attendant to it such as the Bill of Rights of citizens. Instances of culture and traditions that clash head on with democratic practices, especially where there is oppression of the females, should be revisited with the view of changing them. It will be of little help to try and change the school environment if structures of society that encourage oppression of women are still intact.

Programmes that are aimed at conscientizing all female school leaders about their plight should be launched. There is need to stir the female school leaders out of this psychological grip. It is imperative that the likes of women leaders who attended the 1995 Beijing Women Conference should launch a campaign on women leader rights in areas such as Venda. Shakeshaft (1989) as well supports the idea of conscientization of female school leaders so that they can speak with one voice against discrimination on the job. It must be remembered that it took decades for the Blacks to understand the ills of the Apartheid system and to feel the need to dismantle it. At last it was the enlightened few individuals who took it upon themselves to conscientize the masses and to bring the country to where it is today. The same can be said of the women leaders. They, too, can make the difference in terms of

conscientizing the female principals in Venda.

Initiatives should be taken by those administering education to educate communities through relevant structures to change their perception of women leaders. Non-sexism should not only be a slogan. It must also mean that leaders should be seen as leaders and not as males and females. Communities should be made aware that leadership has got nothing to do with the sex of the individual, but has got to do with qualities. According to Pigford et al. (1993) female school leaders should reach out to the communities. Female principals in Venda should go out to the community and be visible. They must work twice as hard so that they become acceptable as leaders. They do not have to be masculine, but they need to work on their self-image. They need to win the confidence of the public by being seen assuming active roles in community structures.

A process should be begun to affirm non-sexism in school and in educational administration. Females with minimum qualifications should be trained and appointed school principals, circuit managers and directors of education. No category of school should be reserved for female as is the order of the day. The scenario on promotional posts should be changed. Education Department should formulate a policy that emphasizes gender equity on promotions and also stick to it. The past gender imbalances can only be achieved by increasing the number of females on promotional posts. Non-sexism it appears will be hard to come by, little wonder that in the Northern Province of which Venda is part, there is not a single female

in the top eight in the Department. Is gender equity in education a distant dream? It is not supposed to be so. Promotion procedures need to be transformed as well. Interviewing panels should consist of an equal number of males and females.

Potential principals must undergo training in principalship. Those already appointed must receive regular in-service training. Training to have a curriculum that deals with gender diversity and gender issues in education. In training, females must be made aware of the potential problems that they might encounter on the job and also be equipped with the required skills to be able to cope with those problems. Training should also include making available literature that can be useful to the female principal. Relevant literature would at the same time be improvising for the absence of role models and mentors. Preparing females for coping with gender-related problems should actually commence at the level of teacher training and be continued at school level. It must be remembered that female principals are actually teachers before they are principals. Preparation at the teacher training level should also include the male trainees. They are the ones who need to understand the potential dangers that they might pose for the female principal.

There is need for the creation of female principals' forums in Venda. It was clear during the research that female principals in Venda had never had the opportunity to come together and share problems that they encounter as school leaders. Female principals would be encouraged to discuss problems in these forums. They could identify problems and seek ways



of tackling them together. Discussions could be conducted in the form of workshops or seminars. The idea of forums ties well with the strategy of networking as suggested by Shakeshaft (1989), Pigford et al. (1993), Pope (1992) and Wyatt et al. (1992). Female principals need to open lines of communication amongst themselves.

In conclusion, the researcher would like to echo Prekel's (n.d.) suggestion that one of the most effective remedies of this problem is for men and women to come together and talk about this problem openly. They need to realize that they are not real adversaries. They need to understand that both at home and at school they have common and mutual interests. In our Democratic South Africa, men and women have a common future and they need to negotiate their concerns together, encourage one another so that at the end everyone contributes to one another's potential development.

#### 5.4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.

Gender issues in the South African education system, especially those that affect female school leaders, remain relatively unexplored. Gender issues remain a bitterly contestable arena and should be approached with extreme caution. These issues are embedded in the very things that make a tribe and a nation, namely, culture and tradition. There are still many women out there who are quite comfortable with the status quo. Further research should concentrate on ways that could induce female school leaders to identify gender-related problems that affect them at work in various parts of South Africa. Further research should



be conducted with the female school middle- managers as well as female teachers. Further research should also look into the extent to which issues impact on the job of the female principal in terms of style, work rate and job-satisfaction. It is imperative that more and more research be conducted in this field. Researchers should be encouraged to concentrate efforts in the areas which are identified as rural and traditional, for these are areas where drastic transformation should occur if we want to see a truly democratic and free South Africa.

In conclusion, the researcher thinks that meaningful change in the life of the female principal in Venda and many other parts of South Africa will only come when men and women themselves start to realize that women oppression is as obnoxious as the Apartheid system from which we are just emerging.

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72  
Tshifhena High School  
P.O. Box 395  
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0927

September 20, 1994

The Director-General  
Department of Education (Venda)

Sir

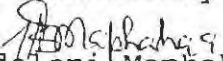
APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS IN VENDA SUB-AREA OF  
THE NORTHERN TRANSVAAL PROVINCE.

My name is Ndongoloni Maphaha, principal of Tshifhena High School in the Nzhelele Inspection Area. I hereby apply for permission to conduct research in schools in Venda area. I am a Master of Education student at the University of Durban-Westville and I am in the school of Educational Leadership and Policies. My topic is "GENDER-RELATED PROBLEMS THAT FEMALE PRINCIPALS PERCEIVE THEY ENCOUNTER ON THE JOB IN SCHOOLS IN VENDA."

I promise to share the results of this research with the Department of Education.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully

  
Ndongoloni Maphaha (Mr.)

-----  
Research conductor



# Northern Transvaal Province

EDUCATION, ARTS, CULTURE & SPORTS

TEL: (0159) 31001 Ext.

Private BAg X 2250

FAX: (0159) 31179

SIBASA  
0970

REFERENCE No. ....

ENQUIRIES Directorate .....

28 NOV 1994

Mr N. Maphaha  
Tshifhena Sec. School  
P.O. Box 395  
NZHELELE

## PERMISSION TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct research in schools in Venda.

Kindly make arrangements with the Area Manager/Circuit Inspector and principals of the schools you wish to visit.

DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE

1994 December 03

The Area Manager

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR RESEARCH ASSISTANCE

I am Ndondoleni Maphaha, principal of Tshifhena Secondary School in the Nzhelele Inspection Area. I am studying for the M. Ed. degree : the University of Durban-Westville. I am conducting a research whereby I wish to establish perceptions that both male and female principals hold regarding problems that female principals encounter on the job in the Venda Sub-region of the Northern Transvaal.

I would like to ask for permission to conduct interviews with all your principals and also to hand them questionnaires. I would also like to ask for your assistance in the following aspects:

- (a) Compilation of names of your principals and their school addresses and telephone numbers(if applicable) \*List to reflect highest standard and the category, P1 or P2. Indicate also gender of the principal.
- (b) Using your office as a distribution and collection point.

Attached hereto is a copy of my permission to conduct research from the Director General.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully

NDONDOLENI MAPHAHA (Mr)



## Northern Transvaal Province

EDUCATION, ARTS, CULTURE &amp; SPORTS

Ref.: 8/1

Enq.: Management

Vuwani Area Office

Private Bag 1248

VUWANI


VENDA

13 December 1994

Mr Maphaha N.  
Tshifhena High School  
P.O. Box 395  
NZHELELE

## PERMISSION GRANTED TO DO RESEARCH

1. The above matter refers.
2. You have been granted permission to do research at our schools and also to use our office as a distribution and collection point.
3. Your co-operation is highly appreciated.

  
AREA MANAGER : VUWANI

## ***THE SURVEY.***

This survey consists of a questionnaire developed from the results of a study conducted by J. Wyatt and R. Atkinson in 1992. The two conducted a survey on issues affecting Black female school leaders. The study was conducted for the TOPS training programme. This work is greatly acknowledged and appreciated.

The following is a list of identified gender-related problems that female school leaders experience on the job. I wish to request you to participate by indicating the degree to which each is currently a problem in your area. Kindly make a circle around the number under the item that represents your opinion. The numbers are 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 according to the degree of the problem. The degree of the problem is represented by N/A (for not applicable), NONE, MINOR and MAJOR.

I want to assure that this survey is in no way intended to expose individual responses, and it must not be regarded as a personal attack. So please, give your honest opinions.

### **CATEGORY OF PROBLEMS.**

### **DEGREE OF PROBLEM.**

*N/A NONE MINOR MAJOR*

0 1 2 3

#### **A. SELF IMAGE.**

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. A female principal is being taken as a token. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. A female principal lacks confidence.          | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

#### **B. THE BURDENED OF WORKLOAD AND LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT**

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 3. A female principal experiences role conflict. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|--|---|---|---|---|

### C. COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AND CULTURAL DEMANDS.

4. Community prefers male principal over the female	0	1	2	3
5. Parents and school governing body do not accept authority of the female principal.	0	1	2	3
6. A female principal is stereotyped.	0	1	2	3

### D. STAFF AND MALE COUNTERPARTS.

7. A female principal is seen to be bossy. by the staff members.	0	1	2	3
8. Staff sees a female principal as too emotional and too hysterical.	0	1	2	3
9. Male teachers are threatened by a strong female principal.	0	1	2	3
10. Male teachers dominate a female principal.	0	1	2	3
11. Male teachers are aggressive towards a female principal	0	1	2	3
12. Male teachers regard a female principal as a sex object	0	1	2	3
13. Teachers are not eager to take instructions from a female principal.	0	1	2	3
14. Female teachers also resist the female principal's authority.	0	1	2	3
15. A female principal cannot associate freely with her male counterpart.	0	1	2	3
16. Male counterparts do not encourage and support a female colleague.	0	1	2	3

**E. DEALING WITH STUDENTS.**

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17. Students resent authority of a female principal.              | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 18. Male students refuse to be disciplined by a female principal. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

**F. DEALING WITH HIGHER AUTHORITIES.**

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 19. Senior officials discriminate against a female principal.                    | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 20. Senior officials do not support a female principal in the form of mentoring. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 21. Senior officials harass a female principal sexually.                         | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |



# APPENDIX F

17

Tel: (015952) Ext. 3211 (W)  
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Tshifhena High School  
P.O. Box 395  
Nzhelele  
0927

April 8, 1995

Mrs / Ms \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Madam

My name is Ndongoloni Maphaha, principal of Tshifhena High School in the Nzhelele area. I am a student of the University of Durban-Westville. I am conducting research in the field of Educational Leadership and Policies. My topic is "GENDER-RELATED PROBLEMS THAT FEMALE PRINCIPALS PERCEIVE THEY ENCOUNTER ON THE JOB IN SCHOOLS IN VENDA."

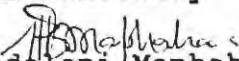
I wish to kindly request you to participate in this research by completing the enclosed questionnaire which consists of two Sections, namely, Section One and Two. The questionnaire has been designed to obtain your views on problems that you as a female principal encounters on the job.

I am aware that you are a very busy person as a school leader, and I appreciate that you will make time on your tight schedule. Permission to conduct this kind of research has been granted to me (see attached letter). As the questionnaire contains no identification information, be rest assured that what you will give will be confidentially treated. I promise to share the results of the study with you upon completion.

Kindly complete both sections (one & two) of the questionnaire and return it in the self-addressed envelope to your Circuit Office at least by May 31, 1995. I will appreciate any questions and I am also willing to talk with you personally. My home address is 38 Munnik Avenue, Sterpark, 0699.

Thank you so much for your attention.

Yours sincerely

  
Ndongoloni Maphaha (Mr)

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Research conductor



